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ABSTRACT

Following the federal court's Ann Arbor (Michigan) decision regarding the education of children who speak black English, the National Institute of Education and the Ann Arbor Public Schools cosponsored a national conference on the subject, the proceedings of which are summarized in this paper. Following an introduction, the paper provides background information, an analysis of the litigation and the subsequent ruling, and a discussion of the school system's reactions to that ruling. The paper then describes programs underway in San Diego, California; Chicago, Illinois; and Dallas, Texas, that are designed to confront the problems black dialect speakers have in succeeding in school and in life. The last section of the paper contains analyses by language experts of the differences between Black and Standard English, followed by some divergent reactions to the Ann Arbor decision and its implications. (HTH)

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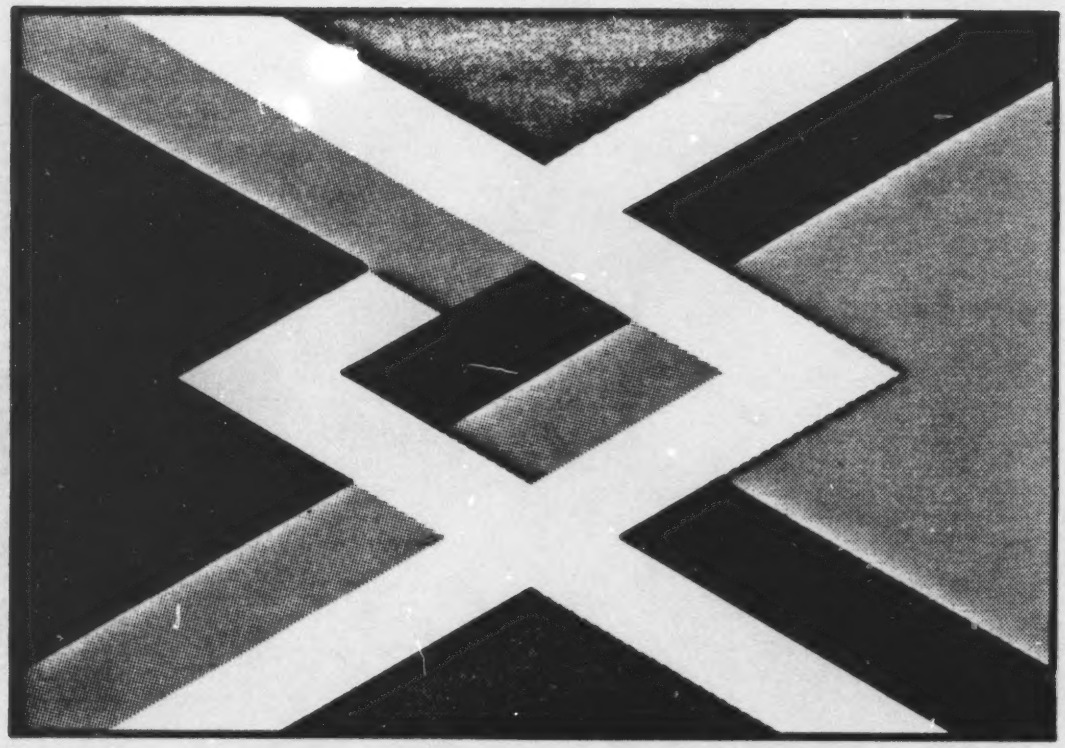
Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Who Speak a Vernacular English in the Public School Setting

A Conference Report



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Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Who Speak a Vernacular English in the Public School Setting

A Conference Report

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"Meeting the Educational Needs of Students

Who Speak a Vernacular English in the Public School Setting"

A Conference Report

June 2-3, 1980

Introduction and Summary

A federal court in Ann Arbor, Michigan, ruled in July, 1979, that the city's public schools were denying Black elementary students their civil rights, by failing to teach them to speak, read and write standard English as an alternative to the Black English that was their native dialect.

The result, the court said, was that the children were being denied an equal opportunity to succeed in school -- and by implication, in later life.

Black English is the indigenous language of many working class Black people in the U.S. Like all language, it is systematic and rule governed in its syntax (grammar), phonology (sound system), and semantics (system of meaning). Black English has a history that goes back to the colonization of Africa and the slave trade that brought various African languages in contact with English and other European languages. Black English is not synonymous with "broken English, ungrammatical language, slang or street talk." These erroneous notions have often tainted our understanding. Although Black English is similar to the standard dialect of the business and market place, the differences are rule governed and not merely errors in the use of the standard dialect. Based upon linguistic criteria, Black English is recognized as one of many dialects of the English language used in the U.S.

The decision was widely misreported and misunderstood. Some news stories left an impression that the judge had ordered that children be taught in Black English, or that teachers were to use Black English in the classroom. Nothing could be farther from the facts. What Judge Charles Joiner directed was that the children be taught to read in "the standard English of the school, the commercial world, the arts, the sciences and the professions."

He also order that, in teaching them, the schools take note of the fact that the language they speak at home and in their local community is a barrier to understanding only when teachers do not understand it, and know how to take it into account.

The decision could affect every public school in the country in which there are students speaking a dialect markedly different from standard English. For that reason the National Institute of Education and the Ann Arbor public schools cosponsored a national conference on the subject on June 2 and 3, 1980. Leading linguists, psychologists, educators and government officials were invited.

The goal of the conference was to provide school systems with information they would need in the wake of the Ann Arbor decision:

--about programs across the country that had made positive steps toward increasing the effectiveness of language instruction for vernacular dialect speakers.

--about what has been learned in more than a decade of research into vernacular dialects in the United States.

A major problem, which several speakers stressed, is that American culture tends to view speakers of Black English, and Blacks generally, as less than intelligent. An Ann Arbor parent, Ronald Woods, said many teachers automatically have low expectations of poor Black students, and do not challenge them academically. Blacks themselves often feel inferior, Woods said, because they have absorbed the cultural bias.

Asa Hilliard of San Francisco State University said many persons view Black children "as incomplete copies of white children, rather than as a distinct group ... with their own culture and heritage." The result in that they make serious mistakes when they test their mental and language ability.

Blacks are in a different position from immigrants to the United States who arrived speaking another language than English and grew up with as strong tradition of literacy. Black tradition is strongly oral, noted John Baugh of the University of Texas at Austin.

Schools must understand how to build curriculams that fit the cultures of their students. A child's culture, said Judith Starks of Northeastern Illinois University, is not an overcoat that he or she can shed and hang up in a closet during the school day.

What follows is a detailed summary of the proceedings of the conference, including a history and analysis of the Ann Arbor suit and Judge Joiner's ruling; discussion of how the school system responded to it; descriptions of programs in San Diego, Chicago and Dallas that are designed to attack the problem dialect speakers have in succeeding in school and in life; analyses by language experts of the differences between Black and Standard English; and some divergent reactions to the Ann Arbor decision and what it will mean.

An appendix contains the conference agenda and a list of participants.

BACKGROUND ON THE ANN ARBOR RULING

In what some are calling one of the most important education-related law suits in recent years, a federal court judge in Ann Arbor, Michigan, ruled that the school system in that city had violated the civil rights of eleven Black students by failing to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal education participation.

On July 12, 1979, U.S. District Court Judge Charles Joiner issued this ruling in the much heralded Black English case and may have set the stage for similar discrimination suits across the country. In his ruling, Joiner stated, "This action is a cry for judicial help in opening the doors to the establishment. Plaintiff's counsel says that it is an action to keep another generation from becoming functionally illiterate."

EDUCATIONAL AND LEGAL GROUNDS

The suit was filed in July, 1977, by the parents of fithteen students attending the Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School, an integrated institution on both the student and faculty level. The parents contended that their children, who live in Green Road, a low-income housing project, were not being provided with the same educational opportunities as other students at the same school.

As evidence, the parents cited the fact that many of their children failed to perform on par with other students and that many others were placed in special programs. They also pointed to the fact, based on their children's academic records, that even when they were promoted, the students failed to maintain their reading skills at the proper grade level.

After a period of negotiation with the Ann Arbor Public Schools, the parents brought suit against the school system. Working with the Students Advocacy Center, a non-profit agency whose principal purpose is to ensure that public school students have access to educational benefits, and with legal assistance from the Michigan Legal Services, a statewide specialized legal assistance agency, the parents went to court.

The original suit brought by the parents charged that the school system had failed to educate their children. But what separated this suit from other "educational malpractice suits" brought in recent years was the fact the parents pointed to the social, economic and cultural difference between those students who were learning and those who were not. In essence the suit held that the children involved were failing in school, not because of any action or lack of action on their part, but because of social, economic and cultural inequities present in society in general and reflected in the operation of the school system.

Further, the suit contended that the officials of the local school district had failed to address the problems confronted by the students and that the system was doing nothing to block the students from the effects of discrimination in society.

These charges were eventually disallowed by the Judge, who felt there were no grounds on which to take the school system to court.

However, Judge Joiner did find grounds for one of the charges leveled by the parents. He accepted the plaintiff's allegation "that the children speak a version of 'Black English,' 'Black vernacular' or 'Black dialect' as their home and community language that impedes their equal participation in the instructional program and that the school has not taken appropriate action to overcome the barrier."

The suit charged the school system with a violation of section 1703 (f) of the Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974. The statute reads, "No state shall deny equal education opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, by...(f) the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional program."

RESEARCH AND TESTIMONY ON VERNACULAR DIALECTS

The trial took three and one-half weeks. During that time, scores of linguists, educators, psychologists, both Black and White from universities and research centers around the country, gave testimony on language variation and its effect on education. These experts pointed to volumes of research carried out over the past two decades on "Black English." Many charged that the dialect spoken by the children did not constitute the barrier to educational opportunity. Rather, they held it was the attitude of teachers toward children who spoke such a dialect that provided the real constraint on academic upward mobility. Such a view is reflected in a policy statement issued by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English which states, "We believe that the Black English language system of itself is not a barrier to learning. The barrier is negative attitudes toward the language system, lack of information about the system, inefficient techniques for teaching language skills, and an unwillingness to adapt teaching styles to student learning needs."

THE COURT RULING AND INITIAL REACTIONS

After evaluating the evidence present, Judge Joiner ruled for the plaintiffs. While the case had lingered in relative obscurity for the two years since the parents filed their original complaint against the board, with the issuance of the judge's ruling it became a national cause celebre almost overnight.

In their rush to get word of the precedent-setting ruling to their readers and listeners, the media played up the sensational and exotic side of the ruling, highlighting only one aspect of the complicated case, the fact that the judge ruled in favor of the legitimacy of Black English as a linguistic system. After reading and hearing the accounts appearing in newspapers, magazines and on the air, many people felt that the judge had either ordered that the students be taught in Black English or that teachers be taught how to use Black English in the classroom. Neither could be further from the truth.

Possibly anticipating the reaction to his ruling, Judge Joiner stated in precise terms what he meant and what the suit brought by the parents was all about:

> This case is not an effort on the part of the plaintiffs to require that they be taught 'black English,' or that their instruction throughout their schooling be in 'black English,' or that a dual language program be provided...It is a straightforward effort to require the court to intervene on the children's behalf to require the defendant school district to take appropriate action to teach them to read in the standard English of the school, the commercial world, the arts, science and professions...The language of 'black English' has been shown to be a distinct, definable version of English, different from standard English of the school and the general world of communications. It has definite language patterns, syntax, grammar and history. The plaintiff children speak at home and in their local community a language that is not itself a language barrier. It is not a barrier to understanding in the classroom. It becomes a language barrier when the teachers do not take (it) into account in teaching standard English.

As opposed to establishing a program that would treat standard English as a second language, or creating a dual language program in an attempt to correct the damage done to their children, the parents were seeking a program that would incorporate current educational theory to the end of teaching low-income Black children how to read standard English. The overriding concern of the parents was that their children be given the tools necessary to operate within the mainstream of society. One of the most important of these tools was the ability to read, not in Black English, but in standard English. To them, any attempt to establish a dual language or bilingual program for their children would have proven counter-productive.

Even after ruling in favor of the children, Judge Joiner felt unprepared to order specific action on the part of the school system to correct the damage done to the plaintiffs. He wrote in his ruling, "The court can not deal with a reading role-model program," referring to the problem of the lack of readers of standard English in some sections of the Black community to serve as role models for children. He continued:

> In one sense it is a cultural, economic and social problem and not a language problem and thus is beyond the issues in this action. In the other sense its remedies involve pedagogical judgements that are for the educator and not for the courts.

He ordered the school system to develop a plan within 30 days to correct the problem.

Under a plan approved by the court, teachers at the Martin Luther King School were provided specialized inservice training, designed to make them more aware of the children's use of Black English.

Judge Jointer stated,

> It is hoped that as the staff acquires knowledge and understanding of the children's linguistic heritage, they will come to recognize the children themselves--not as deficient or detracting but as competent and contributing members of the learning community.

The Conference Proceedings

UNDERSTANDING AND MISUNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE-RELATED ISSUE IN THE PRESS AND BY THE PUBLIC

In the opening session a panel discussed the Ann Arbor case, its meaning and its importance for schools elsewhere. The moderator, Courtney Cazden of Harvard University stressed that the ruling in Michigan will have effects far beyond the Ann Arbor city limits, and that the issue should be examined from a national, rather than local, perspective.

Ronald Woods, an Ann Arbor parent, divided the question into three topics: attitudes, quality of knowledge, and instructional methods.

Under attitudes, Woods said the question broke down into four areas: attitudes of the teachers toward students; students' attitudes toward themselves and other students; attitudes of the community, and the attitude of the parents.

On teachers' attitudes toward students who speak Black English, Woods held that there is a tendency to view those students as less than intelligent. He said this feeling seems to be based on the teachers' general attitude toward the students' race and class. In the case of the students who brought the suit against the Ann Arbor school board, the children were from low-income families and were Black. Woods asserted

that such an attitude toward poor Black students resulted in these children not being academically challenged while in school, which set arbitrary limits on their development.

The attitudes of students toward themselve can serve as is an important motivational factor. Woods cited Judge Joiner, who said in his ruling that as a result of teachers' failing to take into account the language that a child speaks at home and in his or her community, while attempting to teach that same child standard English, the child can be made to feel inferior.

On the general community's attitude toward children who speak Black English, Woods said there is a form of cultural enthnocentrism (holding ones own racial or national group to be superior) which translates into disrespect and low regard for all those who do not fit into the prevailing mode of cultural forms in the nation.

On the parents' attitude, Woods said the parents of the children involved in the Ann Arbor case are very concerned about the ability of their children to speak standard English. He noted that it was this concern that led them to file suit initially. In addition, he said the parents felt it was critically important that their children be exposed to the proper educational stimulus, and that they had demonstrated a commitment to positive motivation for their children.

In his analysis of the quality of knowledge and the method of instruction, Woods pointed out that the nation often views itself as it would like to be viewed, as opposed to as it really is. Thus, he contends, despite claims or beliefs to the contrary, the students at Martin Luther King School have been the victims of racism, and because of their economic status they have had to bear the brunt of a great deal of racism.

Commenting on the image of the ruling generated by the media, Woods said, "The issue is not won or lost in the court, but in the public realm, based on the information provided." He referred to several misinterpretations of the ruling, such that it represented a surrender of white liberals to a radical Black philosophy or a return to the days of separate but equal (Black English is separate from but equal to the standard dialect). He also pointed to a negative reaction from many moderate national civil rights organizations, due to their goal of integration. Woods held that many civil rights organizations define integration as being the "acceptance of the American norm while rejecting aspects of lower class Black culture which they feel block full integration."

Following Woods on the panel was Bruce Fraser of Boston University. He spoke about the importance of parents and the community in general to the development of quality education in an urban school setting.

Drawing on examples from Boston, Mass., he said that no real change was possible without the support of parents of the students involved.

Reflecting on Woods' comments on the view of themselves held by students who speak Black English, Marvin Green, associate superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools, said the most important need of students in many urban school districts today is a sense of self-esteem. "They fell out of love with school as they fell further behind in their academic careers," he said. Green said these students have a right to learn standard English because it is one of the tools they will need for survival in modern society.

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF VERNACULAR ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN THE CLASSROOM

This section of the conference focused on the problems encountered by students in the classroom when they speak vernacular English and how such prejudices affect other areas of society.

In a presentation that closed the morning session of the first day of the conference, Asa Hilliard of San Francisco State University discussed cultural and assessment and their relationship to problems faced by Black English speakers. Hilliard said there was no place on earth where people fail to learn, because people have to learn some basic concepts in order to be able to survive. However, in all countries learning and teaching is influenced by politics. As an example, he cited the fact that the United States began as a slave nation and as a result, there were laws on the books in many states of the union which forebade the teaching of reading to slaves, in some cases under the penalty of death. He believes that the real problem stemming from the ruling in the Ann Arbor Black English case is how assessment processes can be separated from racism to provide for the needs of Black children.

According to Hilliard, many people view Black children simply as incomplete copies of white children, instead of a distinct group of individuals with their own cultural and heritage. As a result of this line of thinking, experts often make major errors in the testing of these children's mental, language and reading abilities, by companing them to inappropriate norm groups (white middle class children).

He predicted that the good coming from the Ann Arbor ruling would find itself in direct competition with the general ignorance of the population about Black English. He said that while the ruling was a rather limited decision, it could serve as a springboard to action for the development of more valid assessment procedures and effective programs for the education of Black children.

Hilliard cited a number of misconceptions about the history and the development of modern English: the belief that the language was

immaculately conceived, that the language is perceived to be naturally superior to all others, that standard English is a fixed language whose forms do not change, and that English is a language that is not influenced by other languages.

Noted linguist William Labov, of the University of Pennsylvenia discussed recognizing Black English in the classroom. Labov's presentation centered on certain characteristics of Black English, which he divided into standard Black English and Black English vernacular.

First, he said, there is a system of meanings special to Black English vernacular. This system is composed of tense, mood and aspect. Tense, according to Labov, is related to the location of events in time. Mood, on the other hand, is related to the relation of events to reality. Finally, aspect centers on the shape of events in time and their impact.

He presented the manner in which the grammatical meanings appear in a sentence:

ASPECTS

They be going
They are going
They been gone
They done gone

TENSE

They will go
They gon' go
They had gone
They wen (t)

MOOD

They might go
They might could go
They (sup)posta go
They hafta go

According to the rules of the standard dialect "They be going" and "They are going" may have identical meaning, but given the rules of Black English a difference is intended. Without a knowledge of these elaborate systems, teachers may provide feedback during reading that students cannot use or in fact may inhibit the development of reading.

In addition, Labov pointed out the difference in English inflections at the ends of words between Black English and standard English:

ABSENT	VARIABLE	GENERALIZED
-S (verb) He work.	-ED (past) He work (ed)	-S (plural) deers, sheeps
-S (possessive) Nick boy.	-S (copula) He('s) here	-S (pos. absolute) hers, John's, mines

Labov also outlined five possible strategies for designing reading programs for speakers of the Black English vernacular.

1. In oral reading, correct mistakes in comprehension, not differences in pronunciation.

2. In phonics programs, put much greater emphasis on the alphabet at the end of words.

3. Bring out the full forms of words in phrases where the next word begins with a vowel instead of using the word alone, in "citation" form. Example: child of mine, walked upstairs, test of time.

4. In reading texts, use the full forms of grammatical auxiliaries instead of contracted forms.

5. Bring out the relation between the full form and the condensed form of everyday speech. Example: I am going to do it---I'm going to do it---I'm gonna do it---I'm gon' do it---I'm 'o' do it.

The afternoon session of the first day of the conference was opened by John Baugh of the University of Texas at Austin, who delivered a presentation on language variation. Baugh used a definition developed by William Labov to place his discussion of standard vs. non-standard English in the proper perspective. According to Baugh, Labov defined standard language as "a language with an army and a navy."

Baugh discussed the differences between immigrants who came to the United States speaking a language other than English, and the current status of Black English speakers. Baugh pointed out that many immigrants came from a cohesive speech community and grew up with a strong bilingual tradition with a written culture, as opposed to Blacks who have a strong oral tradition.

Baugh played a tape recording of a conversation with a young man from Hawaii, who spoke an English dialect of the islands (Hawaii Pidgin English). He had to provide participants with a transcript of the conversation of they could understand what was being said.

Baugh provided the speech sample as an example of English dialect variation. As an example of how the government had attempted to wipe out the manner of speech used by people in the country who did not speak standard English, Baugh passed out copies of a song sung to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic which children in Hawaii sang everyday in an effort to encourage use of standard English over the version that developed in the islands.

The verse went:

> We need to speak American at school and when we play;
> We need to help each other hear our error day by day;
> We need to join together as we open up the way
> For American speech to win.
> Glory, glory, hallelujah, etc.
> American speech must win.
>
> Let's all resolve to practice every little bit we know;
> To make good speech as popular as going to a show;
> Let's all resolve to do our best to make pidgin English go
> Down and out in 1944.*
>
> *Cochran, Betty Ann. "An Analysis of the Meaning of the term 'Pidgin'" as used by college Freshmen and an Examination of their Attitudes Toward Pidgin, " unpublished master thesis, University of Hawaii, June, 1953.

Delores Straker, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, drew lines of demarcation between the concept of a dialect and vernacular. Straker defined a dialect as a "Sub-system of a language," as opposed to a vernacular, which she termed "a separate language system." She also compared the history of the two language systems--standard English and Black English.

She said language does not only function as a means of communication between individuals or groups. It also is a social marker, and an indication of one's class in society. She discussed code switching, in which many Blacks go back and forth between Black English and standard English, based on the social setting in which they find themselves. According to Straker, many Blacks think of the use of standard English as a social status symbol.

William Hall of the Center of the Study of Reading at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign described a group of studies on dialect variation. These studies represent attempts to locate the sources of difficulties for dialect speakers on three different levels: (1) phonological, (2) grammatical, and (3) lexical content. Their findings,

according to Hall, taken as a whole, do not adequately identify the sources of difficulties; they are both inconclusive and conflicting. They contain a number of methodological flaws which cast doubt on their validity. More important, it is quite likely that the theoretical hypotheses which underlie these studies are in need of revision. He pointed out that these hypotheses are based on at least two false assumptions:

> The first is that ethnic differences in language performance on one of the three levels of analysis provide evidence for dialect interference. That phonological differences exist is, of course, obvious; that they actually interfere to a great degree with a child's learning to read is another question altogether. The second assumption is that the test-like situations under which experiments are conducted can adequately measure the effects of dialect.

Research from this perspective ignores the fact that teaching and learning do not occur in isolation, but are influenced by situation and context. In a repetition task, the phonology, grammar, and vocabulary of a child may vary from that in his everyday speech. Contrived, laboratory-type tasks also miss more subtle dialect differences, both verbal ad non-verbal, which may result in miscommunication. In order to capture such differences, the function and significance of language within cultures must be included in any study of dialect interference.

Hall suggested several illustrative research questions which might yield more adequate data in the area of dialect and reading. These questions have been divided into those concerned with (1) structure and content, and (2) patterns of language use and function. All of these questions have at least one thing in common: they take into consideration the influence of situation and context. Questions on structure, for example, are not asked in isolation, he said, but in relation to the effects of teacher-student or text-student communication. Also, questions on language use center on actual language experiences in the classroom and the home. In these ways, by making studies more in line with the ethnography of communication, aspects of dialect interference overlooked by previous studies can be examined.

The implications of this type of research for reading lie primarily in the area of reading instruction, Hall noted.

> If researchers can specify for educators actual sources of miscommunication in the educational experience of dialect speakers, several benefits will be realized. Because the differences specified will be ones which actually result in a lowering of school achievement, a clearer picture of dialectual interference

will emerge. Educators will thus be better equipped to handle problems of dialect that emerge. As they become more sensitive to the cultural differences that influence teaching and learning, teachers will be able to modify the ways in which they interact with dialect-speaking students to better accommodate them, not only in actual instructional methods, but in other ways as well. Changes might also be seen in the materials used for reading instruction. Unlike the suggestions of the sixties (e.g., dialect readers), however, they would be both theoretically motivated and based on empirical evidence.

Ultimately, Hall said, he hoped that research from the prespective he had outlined would contribute to the elimination of discriminatory education in American schools and promote educational equity.

LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION IN THE COURTS

This section of the conference focused on the U.S. judicial system and the legislative history of cases dealing with vernacular speaking students. Peter Roos of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund discussed the legislative history of cases related to language, culture and education from bilingualism to vernaculars of English. Roos said court decisions in many similar cases were behind the times. Of the decision in the Ann Arbor case, Roos said it was an example of the "tail wagging the dog," instead of the other way around. While the case did make some headway toward bringing the subject of Black English into national attention, according to Roos it failed to achieve its major purpose. That purpose, Roos felt, was making a frontal attack on the problems faced by Blacks and other minority groups in an "anglo" school system.

One of the major shortcomings of the ruling by the court in Ann Arbor is that it only dealt with the problems found in the particular case being tried, and failed, according to Roos, to address or reach out to attempt to examine and solve broader problems.

Referring to the charges leveled against the school system that were thrown out of court by Judge Joiner, Roos said the court acknowledged the role between language and culture and the discrimination suffered by Black English speaking students in the classrooms where "standard" English is considered the main language. But, he noted that, even with this understanding, the judge refused to take the case any further than its effect in the classroom, thus not linking those problems stemming from the classroom with the additional problems suffered by Blacks beyond the grounds of the schoolhouse.

Linking the Ann Arbor case and the on-going struggle for bilingual education, Roos said that students who speak Black English, like those whose main language is other than English, are confronted with a cultural barrier to equal educational opportunity. This view was supported by Judge Joiner in his ruling.

While noting that bilingual education is important to continuing development of these children, Roos held that bilingual education in and of itself is not a complete answer of the complex problem. The missing component is the bicultural aspect of the education program, which would allow a student to develop his or her skill in standard English while developing an in-depth understanding of his or her background. He called for integration of bicultural education into the regular curriculum of the schools.

Yet, he said some schools have refused to deal with or recognize the importance of this aspect of a student's development. He cited a recent court ruling in Denver, Colorado, where the court refused to order restructuring the school system to meet the needs of Hispanics living in the city.

Still, according to Roos, there have been major advances scored in the fight for bilingual education. Among those he cited were Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, whose reauthorization cited benefits gained by both groups (those with English as their home language and those without) in the bilingual education programs funded under the act by the federal government. He also cited desegregation cases brought by Hispanics which have resulted in a wide range of programs designed to ease the burden imposed by society on those whose first language is not English. Roos singled out a case in Detroit, where the ruling cited the importance of language instruction as a means to overcome the effects of segregated education. Roos predicted that after proper research is conducted, more cultural incompatibility cases will come before the courts.

Following Roos was Lee Hansen, asscciate superintendent for curriculum and instruction for the Ann Arbor school system, who had experienced the controversy first hand. Hansen's presentation did not center on the issue of Black English, which he held, had already been settled by the court, but on the aftermath of the ruling for school officials and what could be done to help school systems responding to such rulings.

Hansen presented a checklist he had developed, which he felt would help the Ann Arbor school system bind its wounds from the court decision and move ahead towards the goal of providing a good education for all of its students.

First, Hansen said, the most important thing to do was to end the resentment over losing a court case. He believes that attempting to hold on to positions which have been ruled against by the court does nothing to improve relations within the school district.

Next, he said, school officials should take time to closely examine the actual ruling rendered by the judge to make sure they

understood what the school system is being called upon to do. Hansen noted that many times school officials react to published accounts instead of the actual legal documents.

Another point Hansen made was that school officials should always have a court order studied by the school attorney, in order to get a lawyer's critique, and to determine what things the school system was being held legally responsible for and, equally important, what effect the ruling would have on the future educational program in the district.

Other advice offered by Hansen included: paying attention to symbolic language and meaning in the court order; identifying and resolving issues before developing a plan to meet the conditions set in the court order; developing a general blueprint to guide action and to provide a comprehensive framework for action as opposed to an ad hoc approach; and making sure that labor-management relations are respected in any plan developed which will demonstrate to the public that the district is going all out to meet the terms of the judge's ruling.

Hansen said that in the Ann Arbor case many problems resulted from a general lack of knowledge on the part of the teachers and school officials of the role that dialects play in determining how students learn language skills, which in turn determines to a great extent how they progress in other subjects in school.

Hansen had discussed what to do after a school district loses a court case; the next speaker, Carol Kuykendall from the Houston, Texas, Independent School District, described how, after more than 20 years of back and forth court battles between school officials and those who claimed the city's schools were still segregated, a plan was developed out of court to ease some of the problems.

In an effort to develop a systematic program, both sides sat down around a table to work out a plan. But, she said, the attempt was clouded by a number of factors beyond their control, such as the lack of data base, and pressure to make policy decisions on political rather than educational grounds, in order to produce a "quick fix" that would remove the problem as a political issue.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF VERNACULAR ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS

This section of the conference examined programs now in operation, designed to help vernacular speakers overcome barriers to increase the rate of desegregation, and to better prepare educators to deal with the needs and culturals of vernacular speakers in the public schools.

Addressing the curriculum and materials used in teacher education, Shirley Lewis of the George Peabody College for Teachers held that the attitudes of many teachers toward Blacks and Blacks who speak Black English were formed not on the basis of teachers' training, but as a result of how images of Blacks have been traditionally presented in our society. Lewis contended that Blacks are not usually presented in "normal" roles, but in exotic roles. She pointed to the hit motion picture Star Wars which contained no Black characters, as an example of Hollywood's view that there will be no place for Blacks in the future (responding to such criticism, the producers of Star Wars created a major role for Black actor Billy Dee Williams in the sequel, The Empire Strikes Back). Lewis also contended that most stories dealing with Blacks and Black families and the problems they encounter do not result in a happy ending. She charged that for the average non-Black person in the country to develop a positive view of Blacks, the image presented of Blacks by the television and motion picture industries would have to change. She called on film producers to present Black figures in realistic roles that would demonstrate their ability to express a wide range of emotions and feelings. Such a range would do a great deal to improve the self attitudes and images held by Black students across the country.

Speaking of a cultural-linguistic approach to teaching students who speak a vernacular English, Judith Starks of Northeastern Illinois University said teachers must recognize the culture of their students and build the curriculum used in the schools around that culture. She said the educational program of a school must deal with the cultural of the children attending that school. According to Starks, a child's culture is not a overcoat which can be shed when a child enters a school building, and hung up in a coat closet until the end of the school day.

Following this discussion, Jesse Perry described the Oral Instruction Program in San Diego City Schools. According to Perry:

> Schools have a responsibility to assist speakers who have been isolated to develop language patterns that communicate more effectively across cultures. The first goal in meeting this responsibility is to create an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in which students are encouraged to talk, for only in an environment of oral exchange can new language patterns be established. Oral communication is a social activity and must be learned in a social setting in which teachers create situations that motivate pupils to develop additional communicative powers.
>
> In addition to oral language patterns, all students need assistance in such speech producing techniques as speaking loudly enough to be heard and enunciating clearly enough to be understood. This is part of the language arts program in all San Diego City Schools. Role playing and classroom drama also provide opportunity for this instruction.

The Oral Communication Instruction program is a major component of the San Diego City Schools Plan for Integration; it is under the direction of the Programs Division. Its major goals are:

1. To design learning activities that will help students master speech patterns that will provide them equal opportunities for careers and higher education.

2. To create a classroom atmosphere in which the oral language patterns of all students are accepted and freely discussed.

3. To provide all students with the opportunity to develop skills that will assist them to speak with clarity and effectiveness.

Oral language lessons are designed to enhance the learning of all students in regular classroom situations, rather than in a program where students are removed to a separate classroom for oral language lessons. Such a practice would have the danger of becoming another form of isolation.

Through well-guided oral language activities, students will:

--Develop ability to think of events coherently and sequentially in all subject areas.

--Build suitable vocabulary that will broaden their level of communication and enable them to effectively master and use language in expressing abstract thoughts and personal ideas.

--Speak in a variety of situations and audiences, including numerous activities that will strengthen and promote the use of standard English.

Perry described how the program and its strategies were planned by an interdivisional committee with representatives from elementary, secondary, student service, and community service divisions, as well as from compensatory education, Emergency School Aid Act and school improvement offices, including the language arts staff. The committee consisted of approximately twenty-five members.

He said that as integration programs bring together students from a variety of backgrounds, the need to speak and listen with understanding across cultures becomes clear. Building on an oral language program already in operation, district staff began implementation of the Oral Communication Instruction Program to meet that need. Designed to help all students, K-12, improve their oral language skills, it is the result of intensive study by teachers and administrators.

In summary, Perry said the program recognizes that students come to school with speech patterns already developed that furnish solid foundations for further learning. Expansion of language skill requires first of all a setting in which the learner is listened to by teacher and classmates. Apprehension about speaking, a cause of withdrawal and hostility among students as well as adults, reduces career and other life opportunities. Attention, therefore, must be given to creating opportunities for students to practice the language appropriate to given situations without fear of being wrong.

He said students need to discuss what they are learning. If students can explain, in their own words, the concepts under study, they clarify their understanding, and can organize and remember them. As a primary tool for learning, oral language skill precedes and underlies the development of reading and writing skills. When students discuss a topic before they read or write about it, they read and write better because they put what they already know into words, which can then be transferred to written language.

Finally, he stressed the importance of acknowledging that differences in language patterns can interfere with communication, thereby limiting career and social opportunities. Daily, students need to communicate for a range of purposes to diverse audiences. By using language to communicate for real reasons, they learn to select informal language for informal situations and formal language for those occasions that require it. Teachers set the model for effective language. Students, through a variety of activities, learn to choose one style to talk in a small group, another to address the class and perhaps still another to interview for a job. The emphasis on fluency, clarity and appropriateness capitalizes on the languages already mastered by students and encourages them to expand their use of language styles in order to communicate effectively with more people.

Ora L. Simpson, of the Reading and Oral Language Program of the East Oak Cliff Sub-district of the Dallas Independent School District, commented that a part of the problem many people have in dealing with Black and other children who don't speak standard English, rests in a view that what these children speech is simply a deviation from the white norm (standard English).

The East Oak Cliff Sub-district is predominantly Black with a student population of approximately twenty-seven thousand. She said very significant educational gains have been made by the students during the last three years. However, she noted that recent data indicate that a large percentage of the students in the area still continue to score below the national norm. The most recent scores (Spring '79') on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Iowa Test of Educational Development indicate that a large percentage of the elementary students performed below national levels in language, reading and mathematics.

While many of the students in the area are bidialectal, a large number speak a primary dialect that differs greatly from standard English and interferes with the acquisition of standard English dialect skills. Even though this primary dialect is a valid language system, according to Simpson, it does not match the conventional language of the educational system.

To help with the problem, the sub-district has developed a program which teaches standard English as a second dialect for students in grades four through eight. The program has three main goals:

1. To help sensitize teachers to the language and needs of students in the sub-district who speak a primary dialect other than standard English.

2. To help teachers know and understand the nature of language and dialectology and their implications for learning.

3. To provide teachers with specialized instructional methods necessary to help students to acquire standard English as an alternate language structure.

Simpson held that if children are constantly harassed for using the language of their community and family, hostility or withdrawal is a natural result. However, when children feel their language is accepted and provisions are made in the school's curriculum to provide alternate language structures, they face fewer difficulties. She believes that when language instruction begins from a positive appreciation of the children's culture and language, they are provided an opportunity for an education which affirms them and their capability to learn. Proficiency in standard English thus becomes an alternative rather than a substitute for the student's primary dialect.

As a result of the program, Simpson feels the district will be provided with a cadre of professionals with:

1. a basic foundation for knowing and understanding the nature of language and dialectology,

2. a broader knowledge base for understanding the impact of linguistic interference on learning, and

3. a method for using this knowledge to improve classroom instruction on both the affective and cognitive levels.

Jerrie Scott of the University of Florida spoke about teacher preparation. She said one of the biggest problems facing those involved in the education of teachers was a lack of communication,

especially in the gap between research and practice. Scott called for the creation of steps which would allow examination of the current research in the field to determine how it is going to be put into practice.

The next presentation was by Thomas Pietras, director of the Language Arts program in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. It was his job to coordinate the specialized training program ordered by Judge Joiner in his court ruling.

The plan called for training of all teachers at the Martin Luther King Elementary School who have a direct or related responsibility for reading instruction. Exempted from the program were music, art and physical education instructors. Each teacher was provided with a minimum of 20 hours of formal instruction through inservice workshops.

The program had a price tag of about $44,000, with some $10,000 of the sum set aside for staff and teacher stipends that would be given to teachers contributing hours in addition to the usual school day.

According to School Law News, if any teachers slated to take part in the program had completed a formal course in Black English at a recognized college or university, they could be excused from the instructional component of the program.

The aim of the program was simple. After taking the course, the teachers should be able to pick out students in their classes who speak Black English and in dealing with these students should be sensitive to the value judgements about dialect differences that people often make. A second goal of the program was to enable teachers to discuss the important linguistic issues relating to Black English and the use of code switching between Black English and standard English by Black students.

Outside consultants were brought to Ann Arbor by the school system to help in the training. Among these were Roger Shuy of Georgetown University and William Hall of the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Shuy conducted workshops on oral language assessment and Hall covered a review of research in the field of Black English and linguistics.

According to Thomas Pietras, the training program focused on

sociolinguistics as applied to education, while examining the relationship between training and the outcome of teacher training. The course covered the following areas:

1. Defining language.

2. Defining a dialect.

3. Examining language as a social marker, which has become engrained in Western civilization, e.g., the use of certain dialects that have a positive social value to sell products on television.

4. Examining the question of teachers' expectations of students who speak Black English.

5. Examining education as a social issue.

Besides Pietras, several teachers from Martin Luther King School spoke to the conference about their experiences during the training. All agreed that they had learned a great deal and now had a better understanding of Black English as a form of speech resulting from cultural difference and not from a lack of culture or an inability of the students to understand the basics of standard English.

Mary Rhodes Hoover, of Edward Waters College in Florida, refuted the idea that Blacks cannot understand what is going on in the classroom. She stated that most Blacks are really bidialectical, which means that a student can produce sentences in both standard English and Black English. However, she said many Black students do have a reading problem. The U.S. Office of Education estimates that 40 to 50 percent of U.S. school children have serious reading problems. Blacks and other low income groups who are largely bidialectal or monodialectol in Black English comprise a disproprortionately large percentage of this group. These are problems that they carry with them into adulthood. She pointed to the results of a study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. That estimated that about 42 percent of Black 17-year olds in the U.S. are functionally illiterate, compared to about 8 percent in the White community (Functional Literacy Basis Reading Performance. Denver, Co.: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1976).

She charged that these problems often result in the formation of negative views of Blacks on the part of Blacks. Hoover said this view is reinforced by a general dislike for poor people held by many. She cited a University of Michigan study that found that a majority of the persons polled said they did not like poor people because they either were a drain on public funds or because they went against the myth that anyone in American could pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

In addition, she said Blacks were still being presented in stereotypes in the mass media. Hoover commented that for the most part Blacks were either presented as brutes, comics or exotic primitives. She said in some cases these distorted images were still found in the school's courses of study. She cited a required textbook used in Mississippi which states that Blacks had many chances to revolt while slaves, but they did not, implying that Blacks were happy as slaves.

Hoover also presented an ethnography of Afro-American language and literacy which divided vernacular Black English, standard Black English and standard English into the following areas:

1. phonology
2. grammar
3. lexicon
4. intonation
5. speech acts
6. non-verbal patterns
7. genres
8. sociolinguistic rules
9. topics/themes
10. values and attitudes

Changing the focus from Blacks in the urban centers of the country, Gary N. Underwood from the University of Texas at Austin, spoke of his research on mid-south English and midwestern teachers. He stated that he had found that in some cases teachers react negatively to accents on the part of students. He cited the experiences of students who move to the midwest from sections of the mid-south and the problems they encounter attempting to adjust to the differences in language.

In addition, he developed a listing of some of the syntactic characteristics of mid-south English. They are:

1. The double model construction
   Mid-South English (MS) I might could work.
   Standard English (SE) He might work.

2. The ellipsis of infinitive verbs of motion
   MS He needs outside.
   SE He needs to go outside.

3. The elispsis of to be form in possive infinitive phrase
   MS The baby wants changed.
   SE The baby wants to be changed.

4. The insertion of for before subject of infinitive phrase use as direct objects.
   MS He perfer for us to stay another week.
   SE He perfers us to stay another week.

5. The it plus noun clause appositive construction
   MS I dislike it for you to smoke marijuana.
   SE I dislike you to smoke marijuana.

6. The inversion of subject and auxiliary in indirect questions.
   MS I want to know (if) typewriter will be repaired tomorrow.
   SE I want to know, will the typewriter be repared tomorrow.

7. The deletion of subject relative pronouns
   MS She is the kind of woman talks all the time.
   SE She is the kind of woman who talks all the time.

8. The use of the expletive it postponed subjects
   MS Its' money in raising hogs this year.
   SE There is money in raising hogs this year.

9. The left dislocation of noun phrase
   MS That dog, I never could hurt him.
   SE I never could hurt that dog.

10. The preposing of negative auxiliaries
   MS Can't anyone fix this lawn mower.
   SE No one can fix this lawn mower.

Underwood said his research had indicated that several of the characteristics (namely numbers 1,5,6,7,8,9, and 10 above) were also common in Black English speech patterns. He noted that most major English textbooks published in the country and used in many English classes, fail to deal with most of these characteristics.

Only the double modal construction, the deletion of subject relative pronouns, the use of expletive it with postponed subjects and the preposing of negative auxiliaries receive more than one apparent endorsement from more than one of the four major textbooks that had been reviewed.

As the conference drew to a close, Orlando Taylor from Howard University provided a summation, under the theme of "Where we are now--looking to where we must go." Taylor said the issues being addressed were not new. In reality, he said, they have been discussed for over two decades.

What was new was that the Ann Arbor case had put the issue of Black English into a legal perspective. In addition, he noted that the discussions around Black English have moved from the campuses of the universities and, as in Ann Arbor, parents are keeping the issues alive.

Taylor offered a checklist for future consideration of issues and cases dealing with Black English. The list included:

1. Making sure that future Black English cases involve a cross-section of the Black community and not just linguists.

2. Recognizing the importance of approaching the discussion of Black English from a variety of disciplines and having those disciplines interacting to develop the most effective programs.

3. The need to rethink and refine the definition of Black English. Distinguishing between concepts such as Black English, Black standard English and Black vernacular English.

4. Black language is complex, and a major error would be committed if discussion of Black language were limited to only syntax and not its role in communication.

5. We cannot divorce language from learning styles. The value of language differs in various cultures.

6. Tests must be made culturally fair. Educators must develop assessment procedures that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the test takers.

7. The goals for language programs in the schools must be defined to include the wishes of both parents and educators.

8. Development of materials to fit the learner, based on a knowledge of the needs of the learner.

9. Research must be international and interdisciplinary to answer the many questions related to the topic of Black English.

10. Attitudes of educators need more careful research and that research should involve the total school community.

A REPORTER'S OVERVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE AND THE FUTURE OF THE BLACK ENGLISH CONTROVERSY

While experts across the country have debated the issue of Black English, most have come to the point of view which underlies the ruling issued by Judge Joiner (which held that Black English was a dialect and that the school system in Ann Arbor had violated the civil rights of Black English speaking students by failing to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation in the public

education system). The real test for Black English will not come in the courtroom, but rather in the classroom of America. For it will be teachers, not judges, who really decide the fate of children who speak Black English.

One of the most important elements in the controversy, which was not given a great deal of discussion at the conference, was the general attitudes of teachers. Writing in the Journal of Teacher Education (March-April, 1979), Susan W. Masland of the University of Wisconsin commented on reactions of teachers to students who speak Black English.

She said:

> Responses to black dialect have included rigorous efforts to eradicate it, to replace it with standard English, to deny its validity, even to attack it as the result of sloppy thinking and questionable intelligence.
>
> A growing body of linguists and researchers, claim considerable evidence for the argument that the teacher's response to dialect is a powerful determinant of whether or not a particular child will learn in that teacher's classroom.

She claims that what the teacher perceives as random errors as the child attempts to speak, write or read could have very negative effects. Among these, she notes, are prompting the child to believe that she or he is in a hostile environment which forces the child simply to speak less. This is, according to Masland, viewed by many teachers as another example of incompetency or obstinacy.

> During the 70's, much has been written about the attitudes of Americans toward dialect. In his book, English in Black and White, Robbins Burling (1973) writes that 'millions of Americans have nothing but contempt for nonstandard English,' that they regard it as 'funny or pitiful,' an indication of 'feeble mental capacity.' He and others say the tendency is to assume that the speaker is speaking an inferior language and is unable to do better.

One major result of this line of thinking could be unconscious lowering of expectations for a child speaking Black English, thus negatively altering the learning environment for that child or group of children.

This view is supported by the members of the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English. In a policy statement issued for the caucus Dr. Vivian I. Davis states:

> The Black English language system of itself is not a barrier to learning. The barrier is negative attitudes towards the

language system, lack of information about the system, inefficient techniques for teaching language skills and an unwillingness to adapt teaching styles to a student's learning needs.

Another voice calling for concern over teacher attitudes in regard to students who speak Black English is William Raspberry, columnist for the Washington Post, who states:

> Judge Joiner's basic ruling, for all the misapprehensions, misconceptions and ridicule that have surrounded the case, make some sense. It seems reasonable to warn teachers misinterpreting speech patterns or test scores of the children they teach. Some speech patterns—mishandling of certain diphthongs, or the dropping...(of)...final consonants, for instance—may indicate speech defects or even learning disability in a child whose home language is standard English...The same patterns in children whose home language is 'Black English' may indicate nothing pathological whatever.

Raspberry cited statements made by Gabe Kaimowitz, the attorney for the plaintiffs in the Ann Arbor case:

> The case is really about teaching children to read...It is not an accident that King is an elementary school. If these children had been in high school, I wouldn't have brought the suit. What we are talking about is teaching children to read without turning them off, without teachers deciding on the basis of their speech patterns, that they cannot learn. I want children to learn to speak standard English, of course. The schools have to see to it that they learn it. But the first thing is to teach them how to read.

Said Raspberry:

> If that is how it turns out, Gabe Kaimowitz will get no opposition from me. What makes me nervous is my fear that some teachers will misinterpret what has happen in Ann Arbor to mean that there is no need to insist that children learn standard English.

The news concerning the Ann Arbor decision may soon disappear from the pages of the country's major papers, no longer be heard over the nation's airwaves and may soon vanish from the pages of the news magazines. But, the problem of teaching Black children to read, which has been here since the slave was bound and transported to the Western Hemisphere, remains. And whether or not the approach order by the court becomes a modern day Rosetta stone for deciphering the mysteries of teaching reading to Black children remains a question that is yet unanswered.